THE MOTHER'S CHAIN; OR, THE BROKEN LINK.

BY EMMA MARSHALL,

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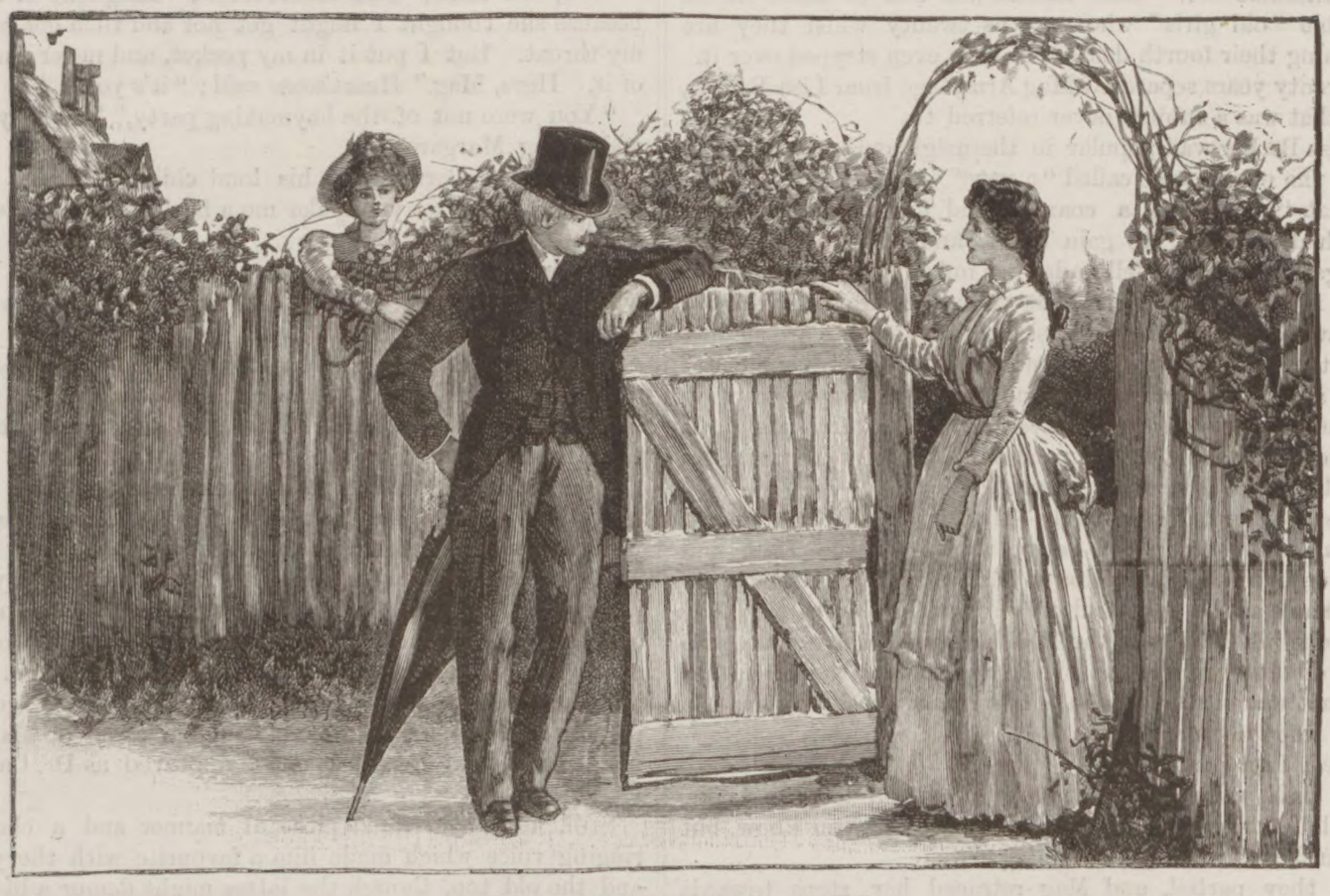


"Elsie's voice broke the spell." *p.* 19.

CHAPTER II.

PREPARING FOR FLIGHT.

When once a desire takes possession of our minds, and a wish for some unattained good is ever uppermost, we all know how it grows in dimensions and gathers force with indulgence. If this desire is a purely unselfish and laudable one, it may grow as it listeth; but when there are "ifs" bristling up in our minds, and we have our own doubts as to the righteousness of our aim, we may feel pretty sure that it is best to check it, stamp it out, and bravely turn our thoughts in another direction.

Certainly, in Margaret Armytage's case the desire, as she told herself, to spread her wings and take flight, did grow and strengthen mightily. And her chief friend in the village of Besthorpe was not likely to let the subject slumber.

A few days after Mrs. Armytage's birthday, Mag had gone to the Hall to tea, and she was talking with her friend Lisa Barker in the library, which the Squire's absence in London had left vacant.

"We can turn in and have a good pasturage amongst the books now father is away," Lisa said. "And mind you come every afternoon when you have done with those children. How sick I should get of drumming French into them, and having them everlastingly at my heels! You were made for something better than a drudge, Mag."

This remark followed two hours of somewhat desultory reading, and Mag, who had her note-book with her, in which she made a rather medley collection of quotations, rose, and said she must be getting back. "Mother may want me."

"How glad I am," Lisa said, "I am pretty well my own mistress. Father would not notice if I were out all day. I had to play a game of bezique every evening, but I have struck at that. It is not likely I can waste my time on games. It is the oddest thing that my father, a scholar himself, takes no pride in me—says women only get a smattering of knowledge, and make themselves ridiculous. I daresay your mother talks in the same way."

"Oh, no," Mag said, rising at once on the defensive, "oh, no. Mother never talks like that; she is only too proud of us all, and dreads parting from us."

"Well, have you thought any more of what I said? I quite believe I can get you that situation as companion to the young lady who is to attend the lectures at Queen's College, and wants a companion to go with her and study. At home you would pick up a great deal, and help her with her work. Just say the word and I will write to my aunt in London about it, only you must make haste and decide, because heaps of people would be ready to snap at such a place."

"There is no harm in writing," Mag said; "would there be any salary?"

"Salary? of course! A hundred a year. I daresay."

"A hundred a year! Oh, that is splendid! I could then add, you know, so much to mother's income."

"Of course you could. Well, I will write to-night, and let you know. Girls like us with high aspirations can't vegetate at Besthorpe all our lives, and I am certain you will do something good if you get the chance."

"Girls like us!" Miss Barker was one of those rather pitiable "old girls" who pose as twenty when they are touching their fourth decade, or have even stepped over it.

Twenty years separated Mag Armytage from Lisa Barker, but that was a subject never referred to.

Miss Barker was popular in the neighbourhood, and had what the poor people called "a way" with her.

That "way" was a coaxing and flattering one, when she had anything to gain by it, and, all unconsciously, Margaret Armytage fell under her influence by that means.

It is pleasant to hear that your gifts are greatly above the average, that the circumstances of your life are against you, that you are infinitely more cultivated in your tastes than any of your neighbours and friends—always excepting the neighbour who is administering the flattery—and it is so nice to swallow it! I need not say that Mag was no unwilling recipient of the dose.

Lisa Barker had only lately—that is, since Margaret had grown into womanhood—come to live at the Hall, and Mag enjoyed the distinction of her friendship, and liked to hear she was the only kindred spirit within her reach. The previous inhabitants of the Hall had been old people, who were distant connections of the Squire, and the place and all that was in it had been left to him two years before the time when my story opens.

Well, Lisa Barker said—

"I shall write at once to my friend, and let you know. I shall be most dreadfully sorry to lose you, you know, but we must not be selfish, dear Mag!"

So they parted, and Mag retraced her steps towards the Knoll in a somewhat troubled state of mind, and her silence at the seven o'clock meal struck her mother as rather unusual.

The children, on the contrary, were very talkative, and Bernard especially vociferous about the delights of a haymaking party in one of the farmer's fields.

"Mrs. Haycock was so disappointed you did not take us, Mag. She said she supposed now you had Miss Barker for a friend you didn't care for homely pleasures. I could not fancy Miss Barker playing in a hayfield; she is much too learned."

Elsie said this with some bitterness in her voice. The afternoon had been very hot, and she had found the excursion to the hayfield less delightful than her sisters and Bernard had done.

"Mr. Grey was playing in the hay like anything," Elfin said. "He rolled Bernard up into a hay mummy, and laughed just as much as any one."

"I didn't laugh then," Bernard said; "I was nearly smuddered. I don't like hay mummies."

"What is the matter, Mag?" Elsie asked at last. "You have scarcely spoken a word all tea-time."

Mag rallied at once.

"Well, really, when you are all talking at once of hay mummies and the like, there is no chance to get in a word edgewise; is there, mother?"

"Look, Mag! there's Mr. Grey coming up the garden," and Elsie went to the verandah upon which the window opened, as her mother said,—

"Ask Mr. Grey to come in."

Mr. Grey did not seem unwilling. He waved a blue handkerchief in his hand, and said,—

"This is somebody's lost property, found in Mrs. Haycock's field. She asked me to leave it as I was passing."

"It is very kind of you to take the trouble," Mrs. Armytage said; "is it your handkerchief, Elsie?"

"No, it's mine," said Heart'sease; "Mag lent it to me because she thought I might get hot and then get cold in my throat. But I put it in my pocket, and never thought of it. Here, Mag," Heart'sease said; "it's yours."

"You were not of the haymaking party," Mr. Grey said, addressing Margaret.

"No," said Bernard, in his loud childish treble; "she would not have let you make me a hay mummy if she had. I hated it. I did!"

"Poor little man! I am sorry I frightened you. When will you forgive me? But, you know, all is fair in love and war."

Mrs. Armytage now made a move to the drawing-room, and Mr. Grey followed. The children disappeared under Mag's care, for she felt that Elsie had done her share with them for that day.

Mrs. Armytage and Mr. Grey were left together, Elsie going into the garden to see after some carnations, and water the mignonette under the windows.

Mr. Grey had lately come to Besthorpe as a young partner to old Dr. Cayley, the surgeon, physician, and apothecary of the district. The partnership would probably end in his succeeding to the practice in due course. Mr. Grey was reported to be very clever, and was getting popular in the neighbourhood, although some of his new-fangled notions were not as much approved as Dr. Cayley's large doses had been.

Still, he had a frank, pleasant manner and a cheerful, ringing voice which made him a favourite with the young and the old too, though the latter might demur a little at some of his prescriptions, which were on the side of moderation in food and drink, and less medicine and more fresh air.

"We had quite a jolly time in the hayfield," Mr. Grey was saying; "your children, Mrs. Armytage, are so natural and simple in their ways—it is quite refreshing. The boy is a fine little fellow. You must be proud of him."

"Bernard is a dear child," was the reply; "I only hope we shall not spoil him. I am so glad to hear you praise the children, for sometimes I fear that they may be behind the time, educated entirely by their elder sister and by me. My means are so small that to give them anything but home education is out of my power. My eldest daughter is, perhaps, suffering more than any of the others from want of advantages. Since Miss Barker came to the Hall, I think she has felt this."

"Is Miss Barker such an authority?" Mr. Grey said, with rather an incredulous smile. "She is a lady—a young lady, I suppose I ought to say—who can talk well. But I should think her a little superficial, and it is easy to see she gets out of her depth, so to speak, now and then."

"I do not know much of her," Mrs. Armytage said, rather sadly. "Mag is her friend in the family, and——"

Mrs. Armytage was interrupted by Mag's return, and the conversation became general till Mr. Grey rose to take leave.

He left a glove behind him, and Mrs. Armytage said, "Run quick, Mag, and give it to him."

Mag obeyed, and reached the garden-gate almost as soon as Mr. Grey.

"We seem to do nothing but restore each other's lost property," he said, laughing. "The blue handkerchief which gave me an excuse for a visit, was yours, I think."

"Yes," Margaret said, "but I should probably never have missed it, while you must have missed your glove."

"So I am to understand we are not quits then?" he said, with a smile. "I am in your debt, my service weighing light in the balance with yours. Is it so?"

"Yes, unless you like to put your visit to mother into the scale. She is always glad to see you. My father's profession being the same as yours, she has an especial interest in you; and," she added, "you generally have something new to say which cannot be said by the Besthorpe folk generally."

"I am afraid I have been on a very well-worn theme this evening—the perfections of your little sisters and brother; it does one good to meet now-a-days such fresh, natural children."

"We are all very hum-drum here," Maggie said, her dark eyes full of fire, as she spoke. "We all think that horizon bounds the world—our world, and we do not care to find out what is beyond it. Our metropolis is Crayminster, and our court is the Bishop's Palace there. Not that I have ever been presented there, but, of course, mother used to dine there in my father's lifetime. Since then our friends have not been in kings', or bishops' palaces, for that matter."

"Do you include yourself in the 'we,' who never care to know what is beyond the horizon?"

"No"—the answer came in a very decided voice. "No, I am turning over in my mind the ways and means to get beyond it. Lisa Barker—you know her, I think?"

"Yes, I know her—the outside of her, that is to say."

"She is the only friend I have here. She is extremely clever and accomplished, and you know she has written a book."

"No, I did not know that," was the reply. "What book?"

"It is in the press; it is a volume of 'Deep Thoughts on Common Subjects.' Why do you laugh?"

"I beg your pardon, but that is such a grand title. I did not know we had an authoress at Besthorpe."

"Pray don't think that is why I consider Lisa Barker so clever; it is almost a distinction now-a-days not to be an author. I see all the leading literary papers and reviews at the Hall, and really, the heaps of books, and the thought of the worthlessness of most of them, makes one thankful not to add to the number: I mean stupid tales and novels—not a book like Lisa's."

Mr. Grey liked to listen to Mag as she talked; her face was one of those which are aglow with their theme.

Her eyes were beautiful, and what irregularity of feature there might be, was atoned for by the richness of colouring, and vivid earnestness of expression.

But conversation at a garden-gate must have an end, and Elsie's voice broke the spell, as, watering-pot in hand, and some bass matting round her arm, she came up to Margaret with—

"Mother says you have been standing here too long, Mag; the dew is falling, and you had face-ache last night."

This was a very prosaic end to the interview, and Mr. Grey took leave and went swiftly down the lane towards his house at the farther end of the village.

Mrs. Armytage was so content to go on in the quiet routine of every-day life, and so intent on making the two ends of her small income meet, that I do not think she looked far ahead about her children.

Perhaps we who have settled down into that phase of life which, so to speak, has no future—a phase when, with us, joy and pleasure are things of the past, and endurance a thing of the present, are a little forgetful of the sympathy which the young and eager ones around us look for, and sometimes fail to find.

Mrs. Armytage was one of those people—and they are many—who are content to take one day at a time, and, doing their best in it with God's help, obtain thereby a peaceful contentment with their lot.

It had not always been so. Mrs. Armytage had known her hopes and aspirations; but they had been for her husband, and not for herself. To see him admired and sought after, and sent for from distant places as a consulting physician, had been a keen delight to her. That he was living in Crayminster above the ordinary style of a country practitioner was obvious to all but his wife. Therefore, when he died at a comparatively early age of a sudden chill and inflammation of the lungs, the outside world were not so surprised as his widow was to find there was very little left on which she could bring up her five children. But she made, as we have seen, the best of that little; and, surrounded by her children, whom she loved with the strongest maternal love, she lived for them, and devoted herself to them. Keeping them all about her, and retiring to the Knoll, which had been, as I have said, left her by a relative, she saw her children growing up under her own eye, and fondly called them "her chain," which bound her to earth.

They were, it must be said, deserving of Mr. Grey's praise. They were "home-made" children, which are becoming a rare article in these times. No doubt they had the faults of home manufacture, and, in their little world, their garden, the flowers, the chickens, and the pigeons were the chief features. Birthday treats, little Christmas presents, haymakings, and Christmas bran pies were events in their history. And there were but few sorrows heavier than lessons unlearned, torn frocks, and the death of some pet, either bird or kitten.

Such was the mother's chain. The links were bright, and shone with no meretricious polish; and it had never struck Mrs. Armytage that as time went on one, at least, of that happy band would be longing to break loose, and, as she said, go beyond the horizon which bounded Besthorpe, and take her part in the battle of life.

Yet so it was; and a week after the birthday chain had been woven of the wind-flowers and bluebells, Mrs. Armytage, quietly seated in her own room, with her Bible open before her, was startled by Mag's entrance.

She wore a bright crimson dressing-gown, and her beautiful hair was floating over her figure, as she stood at the door, shading her candle with her hand for fear of waking Bernard, who still slept as baby in his mother's room.

"My dear Mag! is anything the matter? Come in."

"Mother," and Mag put down the candle and came swiftly to her mother's side. "Mother, I want to go away from home; will you let me?"

"Go away? Where? I don't understand."

"I have long wished to go, and now I think the way is made easy for me."

"Are you unhappy here?" the mother asked, with a sad, pathetic ring in her voice. "Oh, Margaret!"

"No, mother darling, I am not unhappy; but I do long to have some real work. Elsie is quite able to do all I do. I am not really wanted, and I will earn money and send it to you. You will want it when Bernard has to go to school."

"I don't think I shall send Bernard to school," was the calm rejoinder. "Certainly not for some years."

"But I should like to be independent, to earn my own living; and I am offered a situation as companion to an only child of rich parents, who is to attend classes at Queen's College, and I am to share the benefit, and help her in her studies; and then if she goes to Newnham or Girton I am to go with her, and I am to have a hundred a-year; mother, think of that!"

"I think you are making a mistake, Margaret. In my young days, girls of your age were content to remain at home, and make home duties their calling till they married. I should be thankful, when the right time comes, to see you and Elsie married; but I do not wish you to leave home."

"Do you forbid it, mother?"

"I must take time; I must think over it. Who has told you of this situation?"

"Lisa Barker. The lady is a relation of hers."

"I thought as much. Miss Barker's friendship has not been a wholesome one. Elsie has noticed a change in you."

"Elsie!" Then there was silence, and when Mag lifted her face to her mother's, she saw she was softly crying.

"Oh, darling mother! you know I love you. I love you dearly; but don't you understand that I wish to go for my own good, and for yours too?"

"We do not know always what is good for us, Margaret." And then the dear, motherly arms were clasped round the bowed neck, and Mrs. Armytage said, "I must think over it, and ask God for guidance. Good-night."

(*Continued on page* 33.)

DICK WYNNE'S WIFE.

BY M. PAYNE SMITH.

"And you are actually going to leave London for good and all?"

"Yes, we move next week, that we may be settled by Easter. I am to get strong and well in country air, and Cis is to be champion tennis-player, and means to ride all over the county. My sketches will appear in the Academy next year, and I mean to write a history of Tetley, fauna, flora, antiquities, and local dialect, which will be the book of reference to all future ages," and Ina Ferrars laughed merrily at the blank look on her friend's face.

But Miss Miles had her view of the case too. "That's all very well," she said, "but please to remember that you have lived in town all your lives. You will find the country horribly dull, and even if you discover a new flower, or a hundred-legged beetle, that won't make up to you for the absence of cultivated minds with which to discuss it. You will be miles from a doctor, who won't understand your case when you have fetched him. Cicely will break her neck out hunting, your mother will pine away without society, and you will both marry ploughboys."

The two girls laughed heartily. "What a picture!" cried Cicely. "You must come down in the summer, and help to cultivate the minds of the natives. I have done with the High School at last, I am thankful to say, and shan't want to burden my brain with any more knowledge. As to the ploughboys, Ina means to marry a Cambridge professor and help him with his mathematical what-d'you-call-its, and if I am to break my neck next winter I shan't want to marry any one."

"We are really not a bit afraid of the country," added Ina. "We have always looked forward to living somewhere away from all the smoke, and bustle, and noise of London. You have no idea how pleased mother was when Dr. Maberley said that bracing country air would make me strong and well. I dare say there won't be quite so much going on as there is here, but I believe we shall enjoy it immensely."

Ina was quite right in her opinion. Three weeks later Mrs. Ferrars and her two daughters were settled in a charming old house in Surrey, not too far from London, with pretty country all round, and a large garden. Ina had always been delicate, small, and slender, with a weak back, which made her capable of very little exertion. She devoted herself to all kinds of studies, and her mother gladly encouraged her in these pursuits, which made the long hours she spent on her couch far less dreary than they might otherwise have been. Country air, however, made her able to do far more than had ever been possible in London, and her snug little donkey-chair was soon well known in all the lanes round Tetley. Cicely was generally by her side, for the sisters were devoted to each other, though it would have been difficult to find two girls more entirely unlike. Cicely could ride to perfection, was a splendid tennis-player, and report said by no means a bad cricketer; she could walk any number of miles, and never willingly opened a book.

Mrs. Fraser, like the girls, was well pleased with her new surroundings. The improvement in Ina's health alone would have reconciled her to the absence of London amusements, and she had also several old friends living within reach who more than made up for the loss of a larger circle of acquaintances.

Chief among these old friends was the Squire, Sir Francis Wynne, who had once been Captain Ferrars' guardian, and had kept on intimate terms with his widow. "I am only an old bookworm," he remarked, when he came to see them on their arrival, "but all I can do for your comfort will give me the greatest possible pleasure; and if you want any out-of-door thing done—horses chosen, or anything of that kind—Nephew Dick will be only too happy to help you."

"Nephew Dick" was away when the Ferrars arrived, and did not return for some weeks, during which time the young ladies heard a series of most puzzling accounts of him.

"He is by no means a fool," was his uncle's simply expressed view of him; "but he is not intellectual. In fact, his physical development surpasses everything else, but he is a very good lad all the same."

"Mr. Wynne is certainly not interesting," said the Vicar's daughter, when Cicely asked her opinion of the young man. "Some people call him handsome (I don't care about fair men myself), but he never talks except about farming, and hates ladies. At the same time he is a splendid cricketer, and rides and shoots well."

As to the old women in the cottages, they one and all worshipped "Master Richard," who, from all accounts, was

uncommonly good-natured. Under all the circumstances, it was not very surprising that there was considerable excitement at the Mill House when Cicely came in one day from a walk, and announced that she had seen Squire Wynne's dogcart with a young man in it.

"And as it was not the groom," she added, "I suppose we may safely conclude that the bright particular star has risen on our horizon, and that we shall soon have a chance of seeing the unintellectual youth."

Sure enough, the very next afternoon Sir Francis appeared, bringing with him a tall, sunburnt, muscular young man, who glanced round the room as though the various signs of occupation were so many powder magazines, pulled his moustache frequently, and answered in monosyllables to the remarks made to him by Mrs. Ferrars and Cicely, till they gave up the attempt at conversing with him and transferred their attentions to his uncle. Then he crossed the room to the side of Ina's couch, and began talking to her with every appearance of interest about some wild-flowers she had been painting.

"I find being in the country so delightful," said Ina, pleasantly. "I have always been very fond of botany; but there is a far greater pleasure in finding flowers for one's self than in reading about them, and from all accounts there are a good many rare plants about here."

"Oh, yes! there are a lot," answered the young man, eagerly. "I don't know anything about botany, but I know most of the flowers. You must let me get you any you can't find yourself. That little donkey-chair of yours would get along all right on the downs, and there are all kinds of things there which don't grow this side of the river, because of the soil, you know."

"How lovely the downs are!" cried Ina. "I lie at the window and watch the light on them by the hour together. I should like to go up them, if I could."

"I'll take you! I ride here a good deal, and know them well. Oh!" for Sir Francis had risen to go, and his nephew instantly subsided into the shy specimen of awkwardness he had been on first arriving, took leave in an embarrassed manner, and retired, to be well talked over by the ladies.

"Well, Ina!" cried Cicely, "what is Prince Charming like?"

"Very nice, I should say," was Ina's answer. "He knows where all the rare flowers grow, and will take us on the downs."

"Well! I wish I had found the right chord," said Cicely. "I thought him as stupid as an owl."

"He is sure to improve when we know him rather better," remarked Mrs. Ferrars. "At any rate he is a very nice-looking lad."

"He was so kind about everything." p. 22.

So Dick Wynne was made welcome at the Mill House, and before long was a constant visitor. Either he had heard of a horse likely to suit Cicely and wanted her to try it, or he had been to the other end of the county to see after a pony for Mrs. Ferrars' little carriage, or perhaps some old woman was ill and would be the better for a little petting from one of the young ladies. Anything made an errand, and each visit was sure to conclude by his sitting down on a stool close to Ina's sofa and telling her the news, such news as there was in the little village, generally of far more interest as regarded crops and stock than as regarded human beings.

As to the girls, they liked him well enough. Indeed, Ina soon came to look forward to his visits with great interest. True, he was not intellectual, but then he was so intensely interested in all his affairs, and it was such a new thing to the London-bred girl to find that one sheep was not exactly the same as another, and that certain crops would not grow on certain soils. Country-bred girls would have known such things as a matter of course, but Ina had studied botany from books and cut flowers, and found agriculture extremely interesting as well as novel. Moreover, she so constantly brought Dick up short with a question as to the why and wherefore of something which always had been done, he knew not why, that he began to look up his farming books, and grew astonishingly learned about salts and phosphates.

The expedition to the downs came off when the orchises were in blossom, and was a great success. Ina's couch was barricaded with books for a good week after it, and Cicely declared that her language was more polysyllabic than ever. Her friendship with Dick, too, grew still closer. He was so kind about everything, so careful with the donkey-chair, so thoughtful about avoiding ruts, and taking her to see the prettiest views and find the rarest flowers, that the girl's delight was almost overpowering.

"I can't think how it is I am so little tired," she said the next day, when Dick came down to inquire after her. "I made sure I should ache all over, after such a long day, but I feel quite fresh. Do you think it can be because we went over grass instead of roads?"

"That's the advantage of your little trap," was the answer. "It can go into lots of places where a bigger affair would get smashed. I would not have dared to take Mrs. Ferrars' pony-carriage up and down some of those hills. By the way, when the weather is a little warmer, uncle wants you to come up and sketch his big oak-tree—the apple of his eye I call it."

"Do you mean that beautiful tree on the lawn? I should enjoy sketching it immensely, but I shan't do it justice. I know so little about trees."

"You'll learn," was the encouraging answer. "I have just been round the plantations to make sure we cut enough. The trees will have room to grow now."

The two girls spent several afternoons at the Manor. Ina sketched, and Cicely either played lawn tennis with Dick, or walked about the garden with Sir Francis, while the young man lay on the grass by Ina and told her a good many things in no way connected with farming. Certainly Mr. Wynne had found his tongue to some purpose, though he was as shy as ever with all the other girls in the neighbourhood. He was ready enough to laugh with Cicely, and to talk in a graver way with Ina, who heard a good deal about his childhood, and the fair young mother who had faded gently away after her husband's death, leaving a memory of love and tenderness in her son's strong warm heart which years had in no way tarnished, though he had been a mere boy when he came to his uncle's. His life at the Manor had been happy enough, but now a new feeling had come to him; he wanted something more than dog or gun, something better than the business-like affection which was all Sir Francis could spare from his books, and he was beginning to find out what the something he wanted was.

Summer grew into autumn, and Tetley was gay with garden-parties and tennis, picnics, flower-shows, and all country amusements. The Ferrars had several friends staying with them, one after another, and, among them, the very Miss Miles who had so strongly objected to a country life. Even she owned that in summer a village was pleasanter than a town; but she declared that Ina's brains were growing rusty for want of intellectual companions, and spurred her on to her old studies, only to find that the girl had lost her taste for problems, and that mathematics were no longer the delight of her heart. Indeed, she was not altogether sorry when Miss Miles started for a walking tour in Switzerland with a learned and congenial friend, though she would probably have been much astonished had she heard the concise manner in which the two ladies described the situation at Tetley.

"It's all up with Ina Ferrars," said Miss Miles. "The place is pretty enough, and she is mad about sketching; but the real reason for her giving up all sensible employments is that she has fallen in love with a great country lout, who will most likely throw her overboard for that little goose Cicely."

"All girls do it, my dear," was the friend's answer, "and they ought to be uncommonly sorry for it, too. Ina will, after a time, for the man will soon get tired of her, and then she will take up her studies again. It's a thousand pities she should be idle, for she is really a clever girl." And there the matter ended so far as the ladies were concerned.

* * * * * *

"Uncle, have you any objection to my getting married?"

"None whatever, in theory. In practice I should like to know who the lady is before I give an opinion," and Sir Francis's eyes twinkled as he looked across the table at his nephew.

Dick had chosen the best time possible for his communication; dinner was over, dessert on the table, the servants out of the room. There was a slight misgiving in the young man's mind which made him very anxious to get the matter settled, so he went straight to the point, as usual.

"I want to marry Ina Ferrars," he said, in his quiet, steady way.

"Ina! Nonsense, Dick; you mean Cicely? Ina is not a girl for any man to marry. She is deformed, or something very like it."

"Only the least little bit crooked," answered the young man. "Her back is weak, you know, but she is much stronger than she used to be."

"She will never be anything but an invalid. Why in the world can't you marry that fine, handsome sister of hers?"

"Cicely? Why, she is not to be looked at by Ina. Besides, she is so stupid."

"So are you, for that matter."

Dick laughed, and would have blushed, only he was already crimson. "I can't help it, uncle; there was something in Ina's face the first day I saw her which was like my mother, and I've loved her better every day since then. I can take care of her; she won't have to rough it, you know, and I can——"

"Oh! you have made all your plans, I see. Don't trouble yourself about me. May I ask where you intend to live?"

"I thought perhaps you would let us have the agent's cottage; but I have not settled anything. I thought I ought to speak to you first. I have not spoken to Ina or her mother yet."

"That's a good thing, for Mrs. Ferrars is far too sensible a woman not to send you to the right-about at once." And Sir Francis retired to the library in a rage.

It was hard on him. He had always looked upon Dick as a good-natured ass, and had made up his mind at the first sight of Mrs. Ferrars' two daughters that the younger would be the very wife for his nephew. She was so strong, so handsome, so merry, that her want of brains did not seem to matter; and now, after the girls had been welcome at the Manor, after Dick's visits to the Mill House had been encouraged in every possible way, here he was head over ears in love with the delicate, refined, intellectual elder sister, who, however charming, would be, as far as health went, a dead weight on his hands all her life.

Poor Dick! he went to Mrs. Ferrars the next day, and met with no encouragement. "I don't think you know what you are proposing, my dear boy," she said, in her gentle way. "Ina is very delicate, and you would be undertaking a constant charge and anxiety. It would be a thousand pities for you to be tied down to your wife's sofa for the rest of your life, and that would be the result of marrying her."

"I should not mind that a bit," pleaded the lad; "I know I'm an ass, but I could take care of her, and I do love her so!"

Mrs. Ferrars nearly relented at the pleading tone and at the sight of the tears which were gathering in the honest blue eyes, but she kept firm.

"No, Richard! it would not do; you must go away and forget her. Sir Francis wants you to travel, I know. Go away for a year or so, and when you come back you will be glad that you are free" (if you have not married some one else meanwhile, was her thought).

"I'll go away if you wish it, Mrs. Ferrars," said the young man, rising, "but I can't promise to forget. When I come back in a year's time will you let me speak to Ina?"

"If you still wish to marry her you may, if she will have you," was the answer, as Mrs. Ferrars suddenly remembered the Professor of Mathematics, who had always been Ina's ideal husband "Now you must go before the girls come in. I will tell them you came to say good-bye."

Great was the lamentation of the two girls when they were told of Dick's departure; for he lost no time, but went to town the next morning, and started for America a fortnight later.

The year passed slowly away—happily enough at Tetley, where the three ladies at Mill House found plenty of occupation and amusement. Ina kept cheerful and happy, and did not seem to miss her constant companion of the summer so much as might have been expected. She took up some of her studies again, and found a new interest in visiting among the poor people. Many of the old women, who began by sorely missing "Master Dick," found a substitute for him in the young lady who was so ready to listen to their troubles, so willing to help them by every means in her power, while the sick met with constant sympathy from the girl who was still more than half an invalid. Summer came again, and with it news of Dick's return, for he kept his promise, and arranged his plans so as to arrive at home exactly a twelvemonth after his departure.

"I shall be very glad to get him back," said Sir Francis one day to Mrs. Ferrars. "I never had an idea how much I should miss him, not only for company, but he is such a practical fellow; my old bailiff is simply lost without him."

"He always had a great deal to do with the farm, as well as the estate, had he not?" was the answer. "I used to hear him talking of farming to Ina last year."

"Ah! I objected last year, as you know, but if that boy of mine comes back in the same mind—would you—in short, would you consent?"

"My objection was on the score of Ina's health," said Mrs. Ferrars, "and now she is nearly as strong as other girls, so——"

"So we may consider that settled."

A few weeks later Dick Wynne was sitting in his old place by the sofa, talking away merrily, in just his old style, while Ina and Cicely declared that seeing the world had not altered him a bit. Mrs. Ferrars could have agreed with them, as she observed how contentedly the young man's eyes rested on her daughter, and how he had kept her tastes in mind during his travels. She was not surprised when a few days later he came up to her in the village, saying eagerly, "Mrs. Ferrars, may I speak to Ina now?"

She could only answer, "Whenever you like," for she felt his patient, honourable waiting deserved a reward; and he lost no time, for that very afternoon he waylaid Ina as she came in from her drive, and when, after a considerable interval, the two appeared in the drawing-room, one look in their faces told that everything was settled in the most satisfactory manner; and though Ina always asserts that the year's probation was hard on her, Cicely says that it was a very good thing, as it proved to them that if one possessed wit and intellect, the other was well provided with common sense, as he proved when he chose his wife.

THRIFTY COOKERY.

BY GINA JONES.

In the present day there are so many books on cookery that it might well seem unreasonable to add to the literature continually brought before the public on the subject; still, having taught the science in elementary schools for several years, I may perhaps be allowed to follow up that instruction by aid of The Mothers' Companion.

The preparation of small, inexpensive dishes, and the warming up of cooked meat in an inviting and digestible form, are among the special points of difficulty that young and inexperienced cooks have to encounter, as well as the making of soups and stews that shall be palatable and nourishing.

The recipes and directions given in these papers will be of the plainest, but it must always be remembered that however simple and clearly recipes may be given out, much is of necessity left to the care and judgment of the worker, common sense being as valuable in the kitchen as elsewhere.

I will firstly give, for the reminding of such of my old pupils as may happen to see these papers, and for others, a few recipes for cooking up scraps of meat and vegetables.

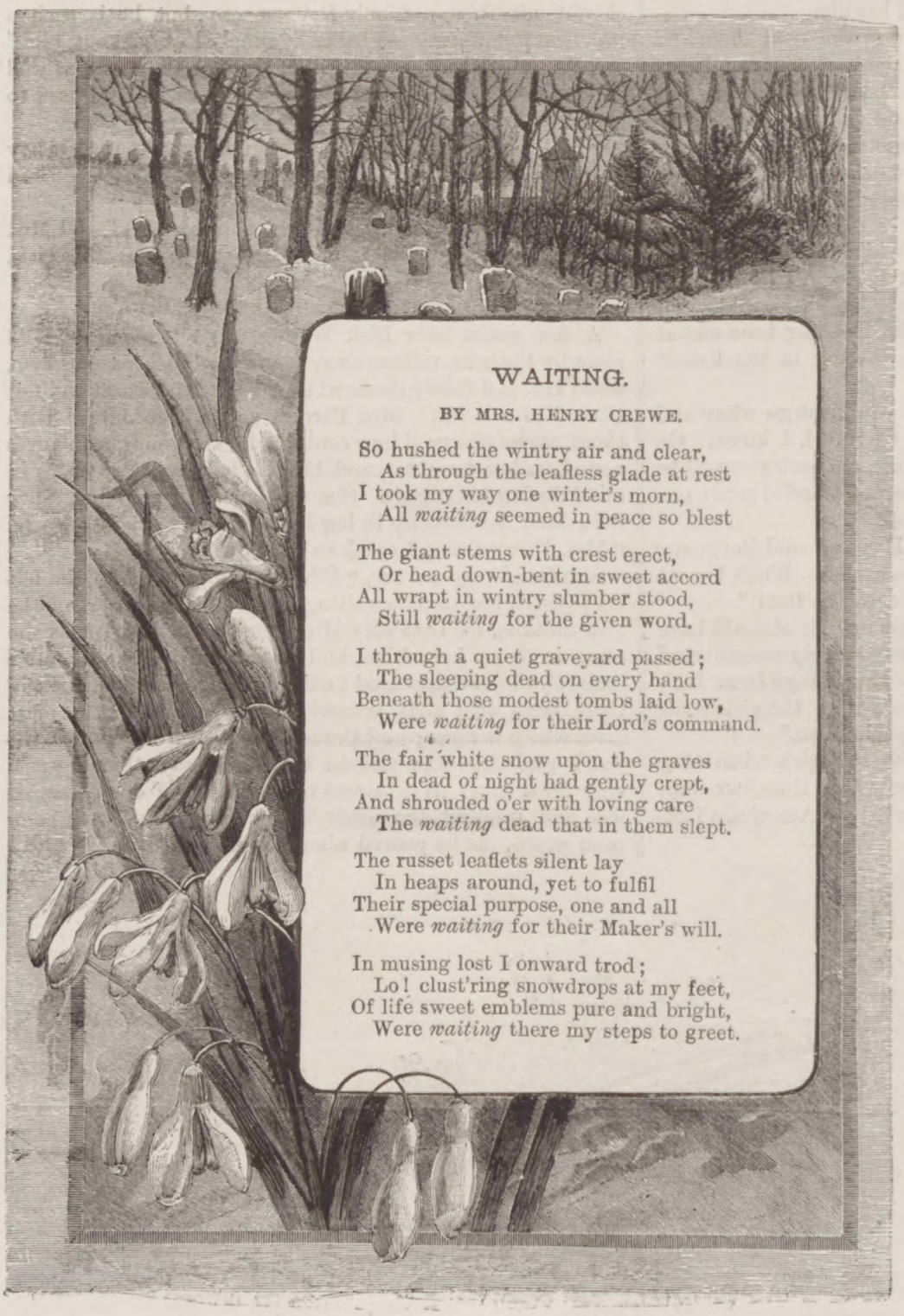
Rissoles and croquettes of meat are always popular; there are various modes of making these that are easy, and turn out tasty, successful dishes.

The following recipe answers well for an economical dish of rissoles:—

Rissoles.—¾ lb. cooked meat, minced finely; ¾ lb. cooked potatoes, mashed; 1 oz. butter or dripping; 1 oz. flour; 1 gill of water; 1 teaspoonful ketchup or tomato sauce; 1 teaspoonful parsley, chopped; 1 teaspoonful of salt; ¼ teaspoonful of pepper; 1 egg; and about ¼ lb. bread crumbs. You will also require some fat to fry the rissoles in.

To prepare the rissoles, melt the butter in a small saucepan, and work in the flour smoothly; pour in the water, and stir until it boils; add the seasoning, the sauce, and the meat and potatoes mixed; stir well in; turn the mixture out on a plate, and smooth it over with a knife; allow it to get cold.

Form the mixture into balls, using a very little dry flour on the surface; break the egg on a plate, beat it up, and brush the balls over with it; then toss them in the bread crumbs, and fry them in hot fat. Care must be taken that the fat is sufficiently hot, or the rissoles will be greasy. There should be enough fat in the pan to cover the rissoles, or they will burst in the cooking; and when the fat is very hot, a steam may be seen rising from it, but it is well to test it by throwing in a small piece of bread. If this should be sufficiently brown in about half a minute, the fat is ready for frying the rissoles. As soon as they are a nice light brown, take them out and drain them on a piece of clean paper, and dish them with fried parsley. The parsley should be washed and wrung in a cloth until it is quite dry; pick the sprigs off the stalks, and throw the sprigs into the fat for a



WAITING.

BY MRS. HENRY CREWE.

So hushed the wintry air and clear,
As through the leafless glade at rest
I took my way one winter's morn,
All *waiting* seemed in peace so blest

The giant stems with crest erect,
Or head down-bent in sweet accord
All wrapt in wintry slumber stood,
Still *waiting* for the given word.

I through a quiet graveyard passed;
The sleeping dead on every hand
Beneath those modest tombs laid low,
Were *waiting* for their Lord's command.

The fair white snow upon the graves
In dead of night had gently crept,
And shrouded o'er with loving care
The *waiting* dead that in them slept.

The russet leaflets silent lay
In heaps around, yet to fulfil
Their special purpose, one and all
Were *waiting* for their Maker's will.

In musing lost I onward trod;
Lo! clust'ring snowdrops at my feet,
Of life sweet emblems pure and bright,
Were *waiting* there my steps to greet.

"So we're content, my Mag and I."

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moment or two; then take them out and drain them on paper.

It is well to remember that fat, when it is hot enough for frying in, is still; any sign of boiling must have passed off. The bubbling sometimes seen on hot fat is caused by water in the fat, and the presence of any moisture with the fat is quite incompatible with nice frying. The fat should be strained after using, and kept in a basin or jar for similar use when required.

If care is taken not to allow the fat to burn and to strain it each day after frying, it will serve as long as there is any of it left as frying medium, and it is really more economical, as well as so much pleasanter, to use enough fat to cover whatever you may be frying. A small untinned iron stewpan or saucepan should be used, and not a frying pan.

Another nice way of cooking up cold meat is to make it into a cake and bake it, serving it with any good brown gravy; this is a convenient method, for the mixture is quickly made, and requires very little care in the cooking, only a slow oven being necessary. The following recipe answers well:—

Meat Cake.—1 pint of cooked meat, minced; 1 pint of bread crumbs; 1 egg; salt and pepper; a little chopped parsley; ½ pint of nicely-flavoured gravy or broth; also some browned bread crumbs.

A plain mould or a basin should be used for this meat cake, which must be well greased and sprinkled with browned bread crumbs, to form a casing for the cake.

The minced meat, bread crumbs, and seasoning must be mixed together, the egg beaten up with the gravy or broth, and then the whole well worked together and turned carefully into the mould. Cover it over with a greased paper, and bake in a slow oven for three-quarters of an hour.

When done, turn it out on a hot dish, and serve with gravy or sauce poured round it.

If there should not be any nice gravy at hand, the following sauce is suitable and quickly prepared:—

Fry a small onion (sliced) in about ½ oz. of butter or dripping, and add to it as soon as the onion is brown a dessertspoonful of flour; allow this to colour a little; then pour in half a pint of water and a tablespoonful of tomato sauce; season to taste; boil and strain.

It is an agreeable change sometimes to have cold meat set in jelly and served with small salad.

Take about ¾ lb. of any cooked meat that is tender; ¼ lb. ham and two or three pickled gherkins; a sprig of parsley, chopped; a hard-boiled egg; and a very little chutney. Cut the meat into neat slices; season it with salt and pepper and a very little pounded mace; lay it in a mould with the chopped ham, egg, and the gherkins sliced, also the chutney. Have ready some cow-heel jelly, melted, and pour sufficient of it over the meat to fill the mould. Put the mould on a saucepan of boiling water until the jelly has become mixed with the meat; then allow it to get cold. Serve with a garnish of salad and beetroot, or with sliced lemon and parsley.

A good and substantial form of using up cold meat is by making what are called "Scotch eggs," for although these are sometimes made with fresh meat, they are frequently made with cooked. The following is one mode of preparing them:—

Scotch Eggs.—The ingredients required for a small dish of these are as follows:—

3 hard-boiled eggs; ¾ lb. cooked meat, chopped finely; salt and pepper; 1 oz. of butter or dripping; 1 oz. of flour; 1 gill of stock or water; a teaspoonful of chopped parsley; a teaspoonful of Worcester or any other sauce; 1 raw egg; and some bread crumbs.

Melt the butter in a small stewpan, and mix in the flour; add stock and seasoning, and boil until quite thick, stirring this panada well to prevent it burning; put in the meat and the parsley, and, when thoroughly mixed, turn the mixture out on a plate and allow it to get cold. Take the shells off the hard-boiled eggs; rub a little flour over the eggs, taking care that the eggs are dry; then cover them with the meat mixture, pressing it firmly to the eggs, and flouring your hands a little while you are doing so.

Break the raw egg on to a plate, and beat it a little; put the Scotch eggs on the plate, and brush them over with the beaten egg; then toss them in the bread crumbs, and fry them in hot fat. The same precautions must be taken in frying these as are given under the heading of rissoles. After all the Scotch eggs are fried and drained, cut each egg in half, and serve garnished with parsley and lemon, or with brown or tomato sauce poured round them on the dish.

I will now give a method of warming up any carrots and turnips that may have been left from a previous meal. There is always a difficulty in warming up these roots, on account of them becoming watery and insipid, but many people approve of the following method:—Have ready a saucepan of boiling water, with a little salt in the water; throw the carrots and turnips in, and as soon as they are warmed strain them, pressing out all the water; mash them together; add salt and pepper to taste, a small piece of butter, and some hot milk; stand them in an oven for a few minutes; then dish them on toasted bread.

To warm up cauliflowers, it is a good plan to cut them in nice pieces and put them into hot sauce. Put ½ an oz. of butter in a stewpan, and mix in a dessertspoonful of flour; add ½ a pint of milk; salt and pepper to taste; boil, and then put in 2 ozs. of grated cheese. Having cut the cauliflower, warm the pieces carefully in the sauce; place them in a dish; pour the sauce over, and sprinkle with cheese and browned bread crumbs; place toasted bread round. Put the dish in the oven for ¼ hour to toast the cheese and slightly brown it.

It is not advisable to keep cooked vegetables from one day to another, but from early dinner to supper time they will not take much harm.

Potato salad is a way of using up cold cooked potatoes. Cut four or five potatoes into slices, and place them on a dish with sliced onion, beetroot and celery; season with salt and pepper; pour oil and vinegar over, and put any green salad around. In the next paper I will treat of dishes suitable for children's food.

MAG AND I.

BY EDITH E. SMYTH,

"Author of "Flash Lights."

We are not rich, my Mag and I;
Folk call us very poor;
Our stock of gold is quickly told,
Nor can we hope for more.
We've toiled and toiled for many a year—
Threescore and ten we've turned—
But somehow here things do seem queer;
No fortune have we earned!

But we look up, my Mag and I;
Things different seem above;
A shining sun we look upon,
That shining sun we love;
For our old bones it warms the air,
For us makes gay the flowers;
We've equal share with millionaire;
The shining sun is ours!

At night-time, too, for Mag and me,
There's grand illumination,
No sparks that pass, no glaring gas,
But lamps of high creation.
When day is done we rest a bit,
For failing are our powers,
And as we sit, and stars are lit,
It seems the stars are ours!

But higher still, my Mag and I
With eyes of faith can see
There's One up there doth for us care—
For us of low degree;
There shines on us a Kingly face.
A Crowned One bids us come,
And His dear grace hath bought us place;
We have in heaven a home!

So we're content, my Mag and I,
To be but poor folk here,
And by-and-by, and up on high,
Then we'll be grand folk there.
Mayhap had we had earthly cheer,
And earthly goods to love,
We'd held too dear the things down here,
And missed the best above!

PARIPURANUM.

THE STORY OF AN INDIAN BIBLEWOMAN.

BY MARY CAVALIER.

MANY are now acquainted with the sad wrongs and sufferings of Hindu widows, and the strongest heart must be moved with pity at their woes. True, the Suttee, or burning of the widow on the funeral pyre of her dead husband, has been abolished by the British, yet every Christian must long to see the tyrannical and cruel customs with regard to Indian widows put an end to.

When the unwelcome little girl is born in a Hindu dwelling, the parents' first thought is, To whom shall we betroth her? Now, should the boy or man to whom this child is engaged die, she is from that day a widow. No jewellery is allowed her, the cloth she wears must be soiled, and with dishevelled hair, or shaven head, she is marked for life as being under the curse of the 330,000,000 of gods. Once a month she must observe a strict fast, and the priests say that by making good offerings to the gods on that day she appeases her own hunger, and allays her thirst! One little widow was crying from intense thirst. No one would let her have any water. But her mother said, "Come, my child, and I will drop water into your ear, that will assuage your thirst!" One marvels at such ignorance. Life is to the Hindu widow a miserable existence; clutched in the iron hand of custom, no ray of hope remains to cheer her lonely way.

But to many of these poor women and girls (for there are 76,000 under nine year's old) the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ has come as the power of God unto salvation. A widow may go anywhere, so one easily gets access to her. When in India I had a Bible Class for widows. There were seldom fewer than thirty who sat (in Eastern custom) on the mat spread on the ground before me every Wednesday morning, at 8 a.m. They varied in age from ten to nearly fifty. Some listened eagerly to the "Old, old, Story," others seemed careless. There was one present, who seemed to drink in every word, and having observed her evident interest for some time, I wondered whether she would be

able to take up Biblewoman's work. So I put the question to her, and she said it was just what she would like. Then she told me so humbly, that for some time past she had been visiting many heathen women in the Zenana, urging them to forsake their idols and to turn to Jesus. She was deeply taught of the Spirit, and always spoke of the shortness of time—not knowing what a day might bring forth. About this time, we were most anxious to begin work in a heathen village, about three miles away from our home. The people were rather low caste, and most idolatrous. At the entrance to the village (called the Village of Peace) stood a hideous black idol. Round its neck even the little children were taught to place a pretty garland of flowers, thus doing homage. The villagers were kept poor by the priests, who made them bring large offerings to the god, saying it could save them from cholera, smallpox, etc. The priests always looked well cared-for and happy.

My heart ached to see the miserable state of the little girls in that village. Most of them were utterly neglected, unclothed bodies, unkempt hair, and many with sore eyes from lack of common attention to cleanliness. What *could* be done for them? The women were densely ignorant, not one could read or write. But God answers prayers, and in my faithful Biblewoman, Paripuranum, I found one to carry the Gospel message, the glad tidings of peace, to this village. It was towards evening, the sun was just shedding its brilliantly-tinted glow through the palm-trees overhead as we gathered together in the courtyard of one of the dwellings of the natives for a little reading and prayer. Paripuranum had brought some of the women from their dwellings, and the headman was very friendly, and said we might meet in the courtyard of his house. True, bullocks, fowls, and even pigs, moved about; smoke also made one cough occasionally, for one woman squatted over the wood fire (made on the ground) occasionally blowing it with her mouth when the flame flickered.

One gets used to these little drawbacks in village life, and as long as the cocks did not crow and the tom-toms were left alone, we could get on very easily.

The few listeners were rejoiced when they heard that Paripuranum would visit and teach them. I asked if they would like her to teach their little girls to read?

"It is not our custom to teach *girls*," they said; "but the Amma (or mother) must do as she likes with them."

They seemed quite touched by a few words of sympathy and kindness, and the poor little girls flocked after us as we wended our way through the deep sand, and between the low mud walls which formed the streets of the village.

Great was the blessing which rested on the untiring efforts of Paripuranum. After some time the message of peace was gladly received into the hearts of five women, who in due time were baptised, and became earnest Christians. Our school for little girls, also taught by the Biblewoman, was most successful. After some time I distributed some prizes amongst them (such simple things, yet *so* useful in our village work).

Each little girl wore a neat saree, or cloth, wound round the body and a piece gracefully taken over the shoulder; the smooth, glossy hair, clean face, and bright, glistening eyes spoke of change and comfort. I compared them in my own mind with the miserable, unclothed beings of eight months ago.

Each child repeated in her own language (Tamil) a verse of Scripture, some easy lessons, and a verse of a lyric, or native Christian hymn. It was a truly happy time, dear Paripuranum's face glowing with delight. Many were the salaams as each child had a little gift; then came plantains and native sweets, and with great glee the little ones went home, laughing and talking as they went along.

Time went on. Cholera, that terrible scourge of India, reached us, and thousands were attacked. Amongst the number was Paripuranum—ill at night, dead and buried by daylight in the morning. The faithful servant had been called home by the Master, to dwell in glory for ever. And thus this devoted worker passed away "to be with Christ which is far better."

At our Biblewoman's meeting she prayed so earnestly for all those who had helped to send the blessed Gospel to India; most fervent were her petitions at the Throne of Grace. Instead of taking the usual half-holiday, she might be seen with her much-loved Bible, in all the heat and glare and dust, trudging to another village at some distance, where there was one Christian woman ready to welcome her. Around her were 5,000 heathen, and Paripuranum carried the message of peace to that village also.

MOTHERS AT HOME.

I.—Introductory.

I am a mother myself, dear friends, so I know what are a mother's troubles, a mother's worries, and a mother's work. Yes, and thank God I know, too, as I hope many of you do, what are a mother's joys, so far sweeter than any others, because they are so much more unselfish. To taste those joys, we must first do the work and bear the worries; and this is often very difficult. So difficult, indeed, that sometimes we feel inclined to long for rest; perhaps, even, to throw up our hands and say, "What is the good of it all? I slave from morning to night to make the home comfortable and keep the children tidy and good, yet everything seems against me. What is the good?"

Never fear; the good is there, though you see it not, and your reward will come in God's own time.

I daresay most of you have heard of the beautiful way in which silver is purified. It is freed from all impurities by excessive heat. The refiner stands over the seething cauldron, and gazes into it from time to time. What do you think he is looking for? He is watching for the reflection of his own face. The moment that is visible he knows the silver is pure. The furnace may be let out, the work is done. So my dear friends, you who are toiling hard, trying to reflect God's image, be not discouraged if at times the battle seem too hard, and soul and body faint.

Christ is the Divine Refiner, and He watches carefully, tenderly; not one pang too many will you have to bear; and every throb of your heart will purify it, and make it meet to reflect the Master's image. The way is long, perhaps, and rough, but He trod it before you, and He bore what no believer ever will have to bear. He trod it alone. Take comfort, then, and do not weary because of the way.

Now when I gave a friend the title of my papers she said, "Of course you will begin with the husbands?" and I answered emphatically, "Certainly not."

Don't imagine for a moment that I meant any disrespect to our husbands, but my experience of life teaches we that if we want to make our homes happy and our husbands happy, those of us who have children must begin with the management of our little ones.

What is the good of telling a tired man that you love him very much and are glad he has come home straight from work, if the children are squalling, and you have to slap one and shake another, and get the baby off to sleep, before you can give the poor fellow a comfortable bit of supper? So with your permission we will keep the husbands till the last. I always insist on my little boy beginning his breakfast and

tea with good solid bread and butter; after that he may have jam or cake. So we will follow the same plan, reserving the best till last.

An anecdote is told of a famous Greek general and political leader which will show that I have good authority for placing the children first. It is said that Themistocles was once asked who ruled Athens.

"Master Themistocles," he promptly replied.

"How do you make that out?" was the puzzled answer, "seeing that he is only about five years old?"

"Well, don't you see, Master Themistocles governs Mrs. Themistocles, Mrs. Themistocles governs me, and I govern Athens. Therefore Master Themistocles governs Athens."

With such a good example, I am sure I need no further apology for putting the children first.

Some years ago, a well-known London merchant got into difficulties. Several persons were one day standing in the Royal Exchange talking about his misfortunes. Of course most of them said they were extremely sorry for him, when a foreigner suddenly exclaimed, "*I feel* £500 for him; how much do *you feel?*" A sensible fellow that, who knew that a pound of practice was worth a ton of talk.

Now I am quite sure that all Christian mothers—No! I will go a step further, and say all Christian *women* must be sorry for the amount of unnecessary suffering which the little ones have to bear. To all who have ever shuddered when they saw a nurse shake a baby, or a bigger sister slap a smaller one, to all who have given a sigh of regret over poor little deformities whom careless nurses or mothers have robbed of their health and activity for ever, to all women who long to smooth the path for the tiny feet—God knows it is rough enough at the best of times—to all those who would say, if I asked them, "Yes; I am very sorry for them," I put the question of the foreigner in the Royal Exchange, "How much do you feel for them?"

Do you feel enough to be willing to sacrifice your comfort for theirs? Do you feel enough to sacrifice your pride and own, "Yes, I know I have mismanaged my children, but God helping me, I'll try to undo what harm has been done, and put as much brightness in their lives as possible?" Do you feel enough to get over your shyness and warn your friend or neighbour that she is cruelly wronging her little ones?

My friends, my heart has bled many a time for the helpless little ones, and for this reason, to be practical, like the foreigner, *I feel*, not £500, for I haven't got them, and they would not ease the poor mites if I had; but five hundred thousand words if necessary.

Now I want you to remember at the beginning that prevention is better than cure. For this reason, although this is by no means a medical course, I am obliged to go to the very beginning of our children's lives. If mothers and fathers would only remember that the training of a child begins from its earliest infancy, we should not have so many disagreeable and disobedient children as we have, nor should we have so many disappointed parents.

When I see a child of five slapped and sent to bed for scratching the baby's face, or breaking one of the best plates, I always feel inclined to say, "You are punishing the wrong person. It is the parent who should be slapped and sent to bed for not having taught her children, by the time they were five years old, to be gentle and obedient, and not to meddle with things which don't belong to them.

Hundreds of years ago you know there were no books such as we have nowadays. What writing was done at all was written on parchment. Now it must have happened one day that somebody had not got any new parchment in the house, so he cleaned off the writing from an old piece, and put down what he wanted in its place. Centuries afterwards that parchment was found, and there, in spite of all the man had done to get out the first ink marks, the double writing was visible. Faint indeed were the first characters, but still they were there.

So my friends with a child. You may do what you can in after years, but you can never quite do away with the marks of the early training. Now and again they will show somehow. How careful, then, ought we to be that every line we trace on the little one's blank page of life is a good one. If we always thought of this, how we should tremble and stop when our voices are raised in anger, or our hand has fallen heavily on the child.

Then, again, remember that our boys and girls are the future men and women of the world. True, they may die young, but it is the mothers who have to train them for eternity first and time afterwards; and I don't know which would be the most horrible, to see your child die, knowing that it had learnt only what was bad through your teaching and example, or to feel yourself passing over the borderland which divides heaven from earth, knowing that you were leaving behind you sons and daughters who, for all you could tell, would blame you in their dying hour for having started them on the broad road which leads to destruction.

I don't expect everyone to agree with me, but it is a favourite idea of mine that a child's character can be made or marred during the first five years of its life. It may alter afterwards, it probably will do so for better or worse, but the general outline will be the same, and the letters traced in those early days will be visible, dozens of years afterwards, when many things have been written over them.

Bearing this in mind, let us go to the cradle of a new-born infant, and see how we can best manage that in after years our children shall rise up and call us blessed.

Baby—How to Wash Him.

The first few years of a child's life should be spent in eating, drinking, sleeping, and playing; and the first few months should be passed mostly in sleeping and drinking.

It is a known fact that forty per cent., or nearly one-half of all the deaths in the United Kingdom, are those of children under five years of age, while nearly one-fifth of all children die within twelve months of their birth. Now, this is a disgrace to such a civilised country as ours, and shows that some thing is radically wrong in the general treatment of babies.

Take the new-born baby. What an affair it is to dress it. How its head waggles from side to side, how it throws up its tiny arms every time it is moved, and the nurse soothingly exclaims, "Oh, it's not going to fall, bless its little heart! Was it frightened, then?"

I maintain with many eminent medical men, that our way of dressing infants is altogether wrong. Why the Russians are wiser than we are, for no baby is ever washed and dressed on the lap there. It is laid on a cushion on a bed, and so turned carefully about, with no strain upon its little spine and neck, and none of those terrible fears of falling.

Now it is not my intention merely to tell you what ought not to be done, or what ought to be done, and to leave you to find out for yourselves how to remedy the evil. A doctor might as well say, "Yes, you've a very dirty tongue, and your pulse is too quick, and you are a great deal too hot. I'm sorry for you; good morning."

What I want to do is to show you what ought to be done, and help you to do it.

We must wash our baby first, and for this we will take, please, warm water and purest soap. None of your highly-scented, smart-looking nursery soaps for us, but good honest yellow soap, or Castile, or Pears' unscented. Having soaped him all over, head and all, we will put him in the bath. How he slithers about—talk about skating, he seems to find the bottom of the basin or bath like a sheet of ice. Think for a minute what you would feel if a giant had hold of you in similar fashion, and you were slipping about as if each of your limbs belonged to different people, and each person wanted to move a different way. You wouldn't like it.

No more does poor baby, though he cannot tell you so, and only his rolling eyes, and frantically moving limbs, can express the terror and discomfort he feels. Next time you wash him, lay a piece of flannel under him first, as he lies in your lap, and lift him and it into the bath together. It will make a soft little carpet for him, and he will no more slip about than you do if you put some list round your boots during a frost.

It is a terrible fact that many children are killed every year through falling into baths; but this is generally in families where nurses are kept. A careless nurse will pour out the hot water first, and then go off to get the cold, meanwhile Toddles thinks he'd like to get in sharp, falls head foremost in, and gets either scalded to death or disfigured for life. Our tiny infant is too young to be within reach of that danger, but it very often gets more or less scalded by being put into water which is really too hot for its tender skin.

"I put my hand in it, indeed I did, ma'am," said a nurse once to me, when I ran up to see what baby was shrieking about. But a hand is no good, hardened as it is by use and exposure, you must turn up your sleeve and see if you can hold your *elbow* comfortably in the water. Not put it in and take it out mind, but hold it there for half a minute. If you can do this, baby can safely be put in. In all probability he will cry when he comes out, but this you must gradually stop by gently talking to him, not scolding. The time has not yet come for real training, but it would puzzle a Dutchman to say how soon a child begins to understand what "no" means—far sooner than many of us believe.

With the greatest care baby's head will often got scurfy, especially on the top. The best cure for this is to buy some cocoa-nut oil at the chemist's, and rub it in well after the head has been thoroughly dried. You will find the scurf will gradually come off in big pieces.

What have you got there, violet powder? No, thank you; nothing of that sort for me. I like to know what I put on my baby—a little pure starch powder if you like, for the upper part of the body, and some finest fuller's earth for the lower, and that is all. Experience has taught me that fuller's earth does not agree sometimes, and produces a rash. In that case use the starch powder all over instead. Rub his limbs and back with a warm hand; this promotes the circulation. It seems cruel to leave poor baby just as he is, but I have so much to say about his clothing, that I must leave it for my next paper.

DRESS AND DRESSMAKING.

FEBRUARY must be classed as one of the dull months, though the days grow a little longer, and the blackbird and thrush begin their evening songs. When February brings bright days they find out all the worn and rusty places in our winter attire, and there are times when the old dresses can be carried on till those bright days come, and then a new one can be rejoiced in and look as fresh as the spring itself. Our illustration No. 1, shows a very pretty style of serge or cloth dress braided, and braiding this year is very superior to what it has ever been before. The dresses that are bought ready braided are done by machine, a great part of the pattern being in chain or tambour stitch, enriched by rounds or leaves made of braid sewn together and put on in spaces left for the purpose, while there are also circles and diamonds cut in the material and black silk introduced underneath them. It is a comfort to think that all this is done by skilled workers and machinists, and poor women are not beaten down to the lowest prices by sweaters in order to accomplish it. The collar, cuffs, and pointed band of our model are of velvet, and so is a V in the sleeve just below the puff, and the front of the bodice is made in one piece with the centre width of the skirt and fastened up on the shoulders. This admits of the style of trimming from the throat downwards and from the waist upwards that is so much in vogue at present. A charming dress of this kind is made of emerald green with black trimmings, and it is a more suitable colour for the latter end of the winter than for the beginning. There are a great many new tints of green this year, and a general return to bright full colours that have for a long while been considered loud and glaring. Among these is a very good violet or Bishop's purple, which is to many people a very becoming colour, and much more serviceable than the heliotropes which, though pretty for some occasions, have always looked too smart in their youth, and too shabby in their old age for wearing in the streets.

Very silvery sky-blue ribbons and ribbon velvets have been worn as bows and rosettes on black velvet bonnets and hats in Paris, and as pale blue suits almost every one, and black plush and velvet are economical wear the fashion at once became general. Tartan ribbons have been much worn in the same way, and it is probable that they will hold their own for some long while to come. Toque hats are greatly in favour, either of a decided colour, such as brown or black, or made up to match the dress and of the same material. Such an one is shown in our second illustration, and is trimmed with bows of ribbon, and can have an addition of flowers or pompons if desired. Silk pompons look very nice and wear remarkably well.

The jacket worn by the same figure is a combination of jacket and cape, that gives a good deal of warmth and looks very trim. It is in two kinds of cloth, plain and fancy, or can be made in plain black silk and broché, or velvet and broché. No great quantity of either material is required, so that it can frequently be concocted out of two remnants. The middle of the back is of the plain stuff and the vandykes of the basque are particularly stylish.

Very useful gloves are being made of a stout kind of black suéde in mousquetaire shape, rather longer than the ordinary four-button length. These are a great protection to the wrists and arms, and obviate the untidy appearance caused by buttoned gloves that come undone and hang inside out over the hand.

The old black kid is much worn again, and so, too, are black *gros grain* silk dresses. Manufacturers and drapers have alike tried to bring them in for some time past, but the American ladies who came over to Europe to see the Paris Exhibition carried the measure by force of numbers, and it is said that the quantity of black silk dresses they took home with them from London was extraordinary.

The waterproofs of the present day are wonderfully ornamental. There is a new process called the F.F.O., or "Free from odour," which is applied to silks and figured cloths, as well as tweeds; and in figured browns and greys they are quite the reverse of dowdy, and are made up in very nice shapes.

Stockings are very good and strong this winter; black ones are more worn than any other colour, and when there is a fancy element introduced, it is a small neat plaid pattern of red and gold all up the front of the leg. The best makers have taken pains to have sanitary dyes, and they have succeeded in getting a rich-looking and perfectly fast black.

The flat pattern of the jacket cape can be had by enclosing 9d. in stamps to M. L., at the office of the MOTHERS' COMPANION.